



News Release

WISCONSIN ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

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February 6, 2006

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

National Guard's 54th Civil Support Team formally certified by Department of Defense

The Department of Defense notified Congress late last week that the Wisconsin National Guard's 54th Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team (WMD-CST) is now certified and fully ready to assist civil authorities respond to a domestic weapon of mass destruction incident. Certification means the unit possesses all the skills, training and equipment to be proficient in all mission requirements.

"This is just one more example of the incredible contributions our Wisconsin National Guard makes to the state and to the nation," said Gov. Jim Doyle, who serves as commander-in-chief of the Wisconsin National Guard, and recently returned from a week-long visit with Wisconsin service members in Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. "This unit will play an invaluable role in preventing and responding to any terrorist incidents on U.S. soil, and will help make us safer and more secure."

The formal designation came just in time for the 54th CST to conduct its first operational mission this weekend in support of federal authorities at the Super Bowl in Detroit. Thousands of security and support personnel, including members Wisconsin's 54th CST, are on duty to keep Detroit and Ford Field safe for 100,000 visitors to the city.

Formal certification was the final milestone to operational status for the highly specialized 22-person team of fulltime Army and Air National Guard members that underwent external evaluations simulating a WMD event in Milwaukee and Baraboo last July.

"The team has completed over 14,000 hours of individual training, and countless exercises and drills leading us up to this point," said the unit's commander, Maj. Steven Brewer. "The payoff is that Wisconsin now has a rapid response team that's fully capable of handling a true worst-case scenario."

— more —

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Unlike most National Guard units that serve as an operational reserve fighting force for the Army or Air Force, the Guard's civil support teams have a unique mission: To support civilian authorities in the event of a domestic weapon of mass destruction incident by identifying threats, assessing potential consequences, advising civilian incident commanders on appropriate reactions, and then assisting with response.

"It adds a sense of urgency to know that our mission is to help our friends and neighbors right in our own backyard," according to Senior Master Sgt. Michael Lackey of the 54th CST. "Today's certification is great, but we'll continue to train very hard to ensure we're at our best if we're ever needed," Lackey said.

Congress has authorized a total of 55 WMD-CSTs for the National Guard.

Wisconsin was among 12 teams authorized in the Defense Appropriations Act of 2004. Eleven other teams authorized with Wisconsin's in fiscal 2004 are either certified or nearing completion of the certification process. The nation's final 11 teams were authorized in fiscal year 2005 to complete the Congressional mandate to field at least one team in every state, territory, and the District of Columbia.

The 32 teams authorized by previous Congressional actions, in 1999, 2000, and 2001, have already been certified, and all remaining teams are expected to be certified by November 2006.

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Note: News media organizations interested in covering the newly-certified 54th CST are invited to contact the Wisconsin National Guard public affairs office (608-242-3050) to arrange a visit after the team returns to Wisconsin later this week.

Current News Releases are available at: <http://dma.wi.gov/news.asp>